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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 BEIJING 003934

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR EAP/CM; CA/OCS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/14/2018  
TAGS: [CASC](#) [CJAN](#) [KOLY](#) [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [CH](#)  
SUBJECT: BEIJING OLYMPICS: [AMCIT](#) DETENTIONS/DEPORTATION  
SUMMARY

REF: A. BEIJING 3685  
[1](#)B. BEIJING 3766

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Classified By: CDA Dan Piccuta for reason 1.4 (b), (d)

[1](#)1. (SBU) Summary: During the period August 6-24, 2008, Chinese authorities detained 44 Amcits. Thirty-four were detained while staging or planning to stage Tibet-related demonstrations; four Christian activists were detained while protesting Chinese policies on abortion and religious freedom. In addition, five Amcits were detained for ticket-scalping and one was detained for an altercation with a taxi driver. Apart from the 44 Amcits detained, another Tibet activist was denied entry into China upon arrival at Beijing airport on August 8 and returned to the United States later that same day. Of the 44 detained Amcits, all but one have been deported to the United States; the remaining Amcit is out on bail awaiting possible trial for assaulting a taxi driver. The number of activists demonstrating during the Olympics to bring attention to causes such as Darfur and Falun Gong turned out to be far fewer than anticipated. End Summary.

2008 Olympics - Free Tibet  
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[1](#)2. (C) Protests during the 2008 Olympics ended up being a story of Tibet activists, including members of the Students for a Free Tibet (SFT) and the Free Tibet Reporters, staging "Free Tibet" demonstrations in public places. However, pre-Olympics concerns about widespread protests conducted by members of a variety of groups - Team Darfur, Falun Gong, and other human rights supporters - were not realized. Tight Chinese Government control over the three official Olympics "protest zones" (Note: Although Chinese officials received 77 applications to hold protests, they did not issue a single permit to protest) and close scrutiny of visa applications (Note: Chinese officials revoked the tourist visa of Team Darfur co-founder and Olympic Gold Medalist Joey Cheek on the eve of his departure for Beijing) likely discouraged or prevented many protests.

[1](#)3. (SBU) For ACS, the Olympics began at 0830 on August 6 with a call from a woman identifying herself as Alma David. She reported that two SFT members, Philip Bartell and Tirian Mink, had just been detained by Chinese authorities while staging a protest by climbing a light pole not far from the entrance to the National Stadium (the Bird's Nest) and unfurling a "Free Tibet" banner. When asked how she knew about this, she replied that "someone" had called her. She claimed not to know who had called her with the news, why that person had thought to call her, nor did she explain what prompted her to call ACS. ACS then called the Beijing Public

Security Bureau (PSB) requesting confirmation of the detention of the pair, followed by a written request for information on their status. Calls made to the PSB were met with a "we have no information" response and written requests went unanswered. Around 2100 hours on August 6, the PSB called ACS to inform us that Mr. Bartell and Mr. Mink had been deported from China on the 2100 Air China flight from Beijing to Los Angeles.

¶4. (SBU) Six of the eight subsequent Tibet protest activities and PSB responses followed the pattern set with this first incident. First, SFT activists staged an event in a public place and were almost immediately taken into custody by security personnel. Meanwhile, other SFT members at the protest site but not part of the event, took photos or video of the activity (that were promptly put up on the SFT website) and called Ms. David. Ms. David subsequently called ACS with information on the protest, provided us with the names, passport numbers and dates of birth of those taken into custody. ACS then called the PSB seeking confirmation of Ms. David's report and followed up telephone calls with a written request to the PSB for consular access. Throughout, all calls made to the PSB netted the "we have no information" response and written requests were ignored. Finally, the detainees were deported later the same day on either the 2100 Air China flight to Los Angeles or the 1330 Air China flight to New York. A PSB officer then called ACS shortly after each plane took off and provided the names, dates of birth and passport numbers of those who had been deported on that day's flight.

¶5. (C) The PSB handling of the final two Tibet protest activities departed from the pattern described above. During the evening hours of August 19 and early morning hours of August 20, the PSB took into custody six Amcits associated

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with the group Free Tibet reporters. The group included James Powderly, a renowned graffiti artist, who was planning a Free Tibet laser exhibition in Beijing. Shortly after midnight on August 21 a final two SFT members were detained after unfurling a Free Tibet banner near an Olympic venue. In these cases the PSB, rather than deporting the detainees the same day, took the detainees to a PSB detention center (Note: All previously detained SFT members were held at a hotel or work unit until being deported.) and sentenced them to ten days administrative detention. After high-level engagement by the Embassy (to include the Ambassador meeting with Chinese Vice Foreign Minister Zhang Yecui, the Deputy Chief of Mission with PSB Standing Deputy Director General Xue Dongzhen and the Consul General calling on Deputy Director General of the Consular Division Qiu Xuejin), the six Free Tibet Reporter activists and the two SFT members were released on August 24. Interestingly, whereas all SFT activists were detained while staging protests, the six Free Tibet Reporters activists were picked up by the PSB before having a chance to carry out a protest. It appears the authorities discovered the plans of the Free Tibet Reporters activists and decided to take them into custody to prevent them from carrying out their planned protests.

¶6. (C) Another disparity in PSB handling of the final two cases is that while some of those in the first six groups of SFT protestors were deported at Chinese Government expense, all members of the final two groups were made to buy their own tickets back to the United States. In post-Olympic meetings with ConOffs from other Embassies, ConOffs from the German and British Embassies advise that all of their citizens deported for protest activities were compelled to buy their own airline tickets.

Christian Activists Arrested  
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¶7. (SBU) The PSB also detained four Christian activists protesting Chinese policies on freedom of religious

expression. The Christian activists included a group of three who staged a protest on August 7 at Tiananmen Square. They were held briefly and deported later the same day. The fourth, Edward Romero, defaced two hotel rooms on August 7 in a protest against Chinese treatment of Christians then went into hiding until he came out of hiding to stage a protest on August 24 in Tiananmen Square, at which point he was detained. During the early morning hours of August 26 he was deported to the United States.

The Rest  
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18. (SBU) Apart from those detained for engaging in protest activities, other Amcits detained by the PSB included five briefly held for ticket scalping and one who got into a fight with a taxi driver. The ticket scalpers were detained for less than 24 hours, had their visas cancelled, then were issued limited validity visas and told to leave China within the following few days. The Amcit involved in the altercation with a taxi driver is now out on bail awaiting possible trial.

How Things Were Handled, Inside the Velvet Glove - A Velvet Fist?  
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19. (C) PSB handling of these foreigners' cases, particularly those of the Tibet activists, was much softer than would be accorded PRC citizens. Tibetan independence is one of the most sensitive issues in China, and PRC citizens demonstrating in favor of Tibet independence could expect to be dealt with harshly by the Government. During the Olympics period, when China was under close scrutiny by the international media, almost all the detained foreign protestors were held at a hotel or similar facility, not at a conventional detention facility. Most of the Amcits were held for a short time and then put on a flight to the United States within 24 hours. The initial group of Christian activists was also handled in this manner. Under our bilateral consular agreement, Chinese authorities are required to notify the Embassy of the detention of Amcits within four days of their detention and to grant consular access shortly thereafter. Due to the rapid deportation of all except the last two groups of protesters, authorities were able to avoid notifying us of the detention of Amcits and to forestall Embassy involvement in these cases without violating our bilateral consular agreement. Similarly,

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although the five ticket scalpers were initially detained, none was kept in detention for more than 24 hours. Their cases were handled by the PSB Entry/Exit Bureau Visa office expeditiously, and all were out of the country within a few days. Even Mr. Romero's actions involving defacing two hotel rooms and leaving without paying his hotel bill (a cost of around \$2,000, according to press reports), in addition to conducting a public protest without authorization - resulted in him being held for a day and a half before being deported.

110. (SBU) The sole remaining Amcit detained during the Olympic period is the one who got into an altercation with a taxi driver. His case is being handled as a straightforward assault case in much the same way as similar cases were handled in the past by the PSB. Throughout the Olympics, ACS maintained contact with ConOffs from other Embassies to exchange information on how their detained citizens were handled by the authorities. They reported similar treatment of those detained for protest activities.

111. (U) Embassy Beijing Consular lessons learned are reported in Beijing 3766.

PICCUTA

